



Black and Pink Newsletter

APRIL 2010 ISSUE

BLACK AND PINK— NEWSLETTER, C/O COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON,
565 BOYLSTON ST, BOSTON, MA 02116

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Dear friends,

As a New Englander I rely on commenting on the weather at the beginning of my letters. I might reference the coming of spring or the ridiculousness of snow we had after a 70 degree weather day. I may celebrate the popping up of daffodils or crocuses around the city. Unfortunately, that tactic does not work as well with this letter as some of you are locked up all around the country. Also, tragically and infuriatingly, some of you do not get to breath the fresh air or feel the weather change on your skin. So, with that reality, I suppose I will not start this letter by talking about the weather, except to say that if the rain keeps falling down here I might drown.

We strive to use Black and Pink's newsletter to tell the stories of incarcerated people and to get the experiences of queer and transgender incarcerated people out into the world, especially to other queer and transgender prisoners. It has been suggested that some of our stories are too sad and that we also need to be offering stories of hope. Beverly Harrison, an incredibly inspiring Womanist/Black feminist ethicist, suggests that as we tell our history and stories of liberation we must tell the truth of the pain as well as speak truth to our joy and survival strategies. I would love to print some of your stories of joy. I know that the evil of the prison industrial complex makes joy nearly impossible, yet from my own short experience inside I know there are stories of hope and laughter that are worth telling. Who has fallen in love while locked up? Who has built incredible friendships? Who has come up with new ideas on how to abolish this system all together? Who has been part of a prisoner led organizing effort to get access to privileges or rights within the prison or jail? I think that our stories of hope are important and would love to share your stories with others.

Last month I wrote about the beauty and possibility present in the Passover story. While you will get this letter after East has passed by I thought I would reference it for a moment. I know that so many of the Christian pastors and chaplains who come into the prisons bring with them hateful and harmful perspectives on Christianity. However, their reflections on the stories of Jesus are not the only one. Queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, same-gender loving people are all welcome to identify with the Jesus story if they want to. There are even some Biblical scholars who suggest that Jesus may have had a queer sexual relationship with his "Beloved Disciple." There is a really fun book, *The Man Jesus Loved*, that examines the homoerotic stories within the Bible.

While Jesus may have had a sexually romantic relationship with his "Beloved Disciple" during his life and maybe even had a similar relationship with Mary Magdalene, I think Jesus' queerness became more real with the story of his resurrection. According to the story, Jesus' body was brutally mutilated and murdered, like many queer bodies have been, but he would not accept such nonsense by the imperialist government of Rome. Jesus was able to defy death because those who believed in his message of love and transformation took his message outward even after they saw what could be done when one challenged the status quo. This is the creation of our queer communities. Even when we consistently deal with violence, especially those in our communities who are low-income/transgender/people of color/immigrant/incarcerated, we get back up and refuse to be consistently crucified.

So, on this Easter, or next Easter, remember that our queer and transgender bodies/communities are constantly being resurrected. We are free to identify with whatever spirituality speaks to our faithful selves. The key to our faith is that we maintain our commitment to love and liberation, filling in the rituals and stories as we need them.

And as always, it has been said that, "once there were no prisons, that day will soon come again!"

In loving struggle,
Jason

"Today"



I was hurt when you went away
 People are ashamed to be around 'cause I'm gay
 Why cant you be yourself and not portray?
 Playing headgames is always a price to pay
 I have asked God to help me when I pray
 You see, I'm not ashamed in anyway
 I speak and mean what I say
 Learn how to love again, it's Okay
 Release is very near, and I can't wait for that day
 Learn how to love yourself first, starting "today"

-Shelton Bollinger

Jamal's Story

My name is Jamal Washington and I've committed just about every crime there is, with the exception of sexual crimes and crimes against children. Since the age of 15 my heart has been dark and my soul cold and empty. Not caring if I lived or died due to so much pain.

I'm currently serving a 30 to 60 year sentence for robbing an armored truck and getting into a shoot out with the police. For the first 8 years of my incarceration I lived like a savage beast, assaulting guards and inmates, staying high on weed and wine, going in and out of the hole and plotting my revenge against my co-defendants.

Then on January 1, 1998, I stabbed an inmate several times attempting to kill him, and I was sent to the newly built SuperMAX for a minimum of 5 years. During that time I came across an ad for Prison-PenPals.com and I placed an ad. I received several responses, but it was one person's life of pain, nonacceptance, loneliness, depression, harassment and suicidiness that really touched deep into the blackness of my heart. Her name was Bozhi and she was transgender. I've always been a straight man who's been very attracted to transsexuals and feminine men and I've always dipped and dabbed here and there, but never all out involved.

Bozhi was very caring, thoughtful, and appreciative, and it baffled me as to how someone who had been subjected to the many biases and cruelties of society still possesses such a caring, loving heart and an undoubtedly beautiful soul. I simply believed that such continuous pain should have filled her heart with anger and hate and made her soul just as empty and cold as mine. But it didn't, and over the past 10 years she has been the best friend I never had, the supportive wife I've always dreamed of, and the beautiful goddess that I faithfully worship.

And through it all, the letters, phone calls, and visits, she changed me, helping me become a better man, while becoming a stronger woman herself. She has truly given me a purpose in life and for the first time, I have a cause that I can proudly stand for and believe in.

Though I've become a changed man, still my reputation as a violent beast follows me, which makes it much easier to be the voice of the gay community behind these walls, and I make sure no one gets mistreated or taken advantage of on my watch.

Yours Truly, Jamal

CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

BLACK & PINK ART

Black & Pink Art will sell artwork and apparel printed with designs produced by queer and transgender prisoners to queer and transgender folks on the outside. Items will be sold online at blackandpinkart.com, as well as sales made at events like Pride Festivals.

Proceeds from the sales will go back into the artist's commissary account!

Want to get involved? Send a note to the address below answering these questions:

- What kind of art do you make? How do you access supplies? What can you receive or ship?
- Roughly about how much \$ would you want for your art? How long does it take to make?

**Black and Pink Art
C/O Community Church of Boston
565 Boylston St
Boston, MA 02116**

Reed Miller, a queer pen-pal, will send you back a letter explaining how things will work! He looks forward to working with you and sharing your talents with the outside world!

No matter though it towers to the sky
And darkens earth, you cannot make the
lie immortal: though stupendously enshrined
by art in every perfect mould of mind:
Angels, Rafael, Milton, Handel all it's Pillars
cannot stay it from the fall.
The Pyramids of Imposture reared by Rome,
All of cement, for an eternal home.
Must crumble back to earth, and every gust
Shall reveal in the desert of its dust;
And when the prison of the Immortal Mind
Hath fallen to set free the bound and blind,
No more shall life be one long dread of death,
Humanity shall breath with ampler breath,
Expand in spirit, and in statue rise,
To match its birthplace of the earth and skies.

Sincerely Written,
Joseph



Celebrity News: Ricky Martin Comes Out!!!



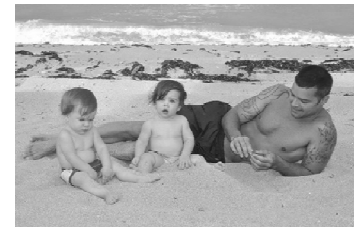
"A few months ago I decided to write my memoirs, a project I knew was going to bring me closer to an amazing turning point in my life. From the moment I wrote the first phrase I was sure the book was the tool that was going to help me free myself from things I was carrying within me for a long time. Things that were too heavy for me to keep inside. Writing this account of my life, I got very close to my truth. And this is something worth celebrating.

For many years, there has been only one place where I am in touch with my emotions fearlessly and that's the stage. Being on stage fills my soul in many ways, almost completely. It's my vice. The music, the lights and the roar of the audience are elements that make me feel capable of anything. This rush of adrenaline is incredibly addictive. I don't ever want to stop feeling these emotions. But it is serenity that brings me to where I'm at right now. An

amazing emotional place of comprehension, reflection and enlightenment. At this moment I'm feeling the same freedom I usually feel only on stage, without a doubt, I need to share.

Many people told me: "Ricky it's not important", "it's not worth it", "all the years you've worked and everything you've built will collapse", "many people in the world are not ready to accept your truth, your reality, your nature". Because all this advice came from people who I love dearly, I decided to move on with my life not sharing with the world my entire truth. Allowing myself to be seduced by fear and insecurity became a self-fulfilling prophecy of sabotage. Today I take full responsibility for my decisions and my actions.

If someone asked me today, "Ricky, what are you afraid of?" I would answer "the blood that runs through the streets of countries at war...child slavery, terrorism...the cynicism of some people in positions of power, the misinterpretation of faith." But fear of my truth? Not at all! On the contrary, It fills me with strength and courage. This is just what I need especially now that I am the father of two beautiful boys that are so full of light and who with their outlook teach me new things every day. To keep living as I did up until today would be to indirectly diminish the glow that my kids were born with. Enough is enough. This has to change. This was not supposed to happen 5 or 10 years ago, it is supposed to happen now. Today is my day, this is my time, and this is my moment.



These years in silence and reflection made me stronger and reminded me that acceptance has to come from within and that this kind of truth gives me the power to conquer emotions I didn't even know existed.

What will happen from now on? It doesn't matter. I can only focus on what's happening to me in this moment. The word "happiness" takes on a new meaning for me as of today. It has been a very intense process. Every word that I write in this letter is born out of love, acceptance, detachment and real contentment. Writing this is a solid step towards my inner peace and vital part of my evolution.

I am proud to say that I am a fortunate homosexual man. I am very blessed to be who I am."

- Ricky Martin, from his music website

The Invisible Man

Freak

By Seth ♥Venus♥ Rountree

A few years ago, I met the Invisible Man
 He was so kind and sweet, I wanted to give him my hand.
 Trauma, fear, and paranoia wouldn't allow me to open my heart,
 So I had to run and hide like a soaring dart.
 He often would ask for a hug,
 Not trusting, my heart would feel another tug.
 As time went on, he asked to do my hair.
 Listening to his voice, and feeling his presence, I wanted to be more
 near.
 But, I kept the lock on my heart anyway.
 Who knows, maybe I was falling in love, my heart wouldn't say.
 I began to respect him, just being with him was a must.
 I thought he was free without any ties.
 Assumptions I made, I guess, don't ask the
 Why's.
 Afraid to cross the color line.
 I wanted to give him a gift and taste his wine.
 A friend told him anyway,
 I spoke to him the next day.
 That wonderful night finally came.
 Feeling joy and excitement, I was sure he felt
 the same.
 Then my heart opened as I surrendered to him.
 His fishes poured into my throat and I heard his whim.
 I knew I was truly in love with this Invisible Man.
 I slowly but surely would now give him my hand.
 He told me soon of Her, and how much he loved her.
 He explained carefully why a relationship could not occur.
 Many orgasms and letters and talks went by,
 This magical man made me wonder why.
 Then he let me live with him in April, May, June and July.
 After many ups and downs, our friendship still has a strong tie.



♥ From the Heart and Soul of VENUS ♥

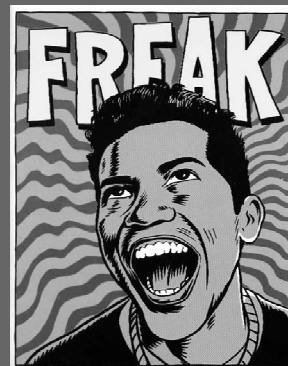
A deep feeling that I don't belong overcomes me
 A stranger, or monster in the mirror
 Out of place, unable to show my face
 Unable to know my own self

I walk through a dark world
 Where faces stare at me with hateful disgust
 Mockery and disdainful whispers
 Paining me wherever I go

I'm a listless being, burdening everyone's world
 An abnormal presence disturbing everyone's mind
 I come from a dark, ugly world
 Sheltering myself with my own hate
 Towards myself and towards the world

Outcasted by contemptuous looks
 And by scornful voices
 Walking alone with my madness
 Confused with my curse
 Hating everything and everybody
 'Cuz I'm not like them
 And I'm misunderstood by everyone
 And can't even understand my own self

-Michael Tackett



Colors

I look around me,
My world wrapped in a rainbow,
Our hope eternal.

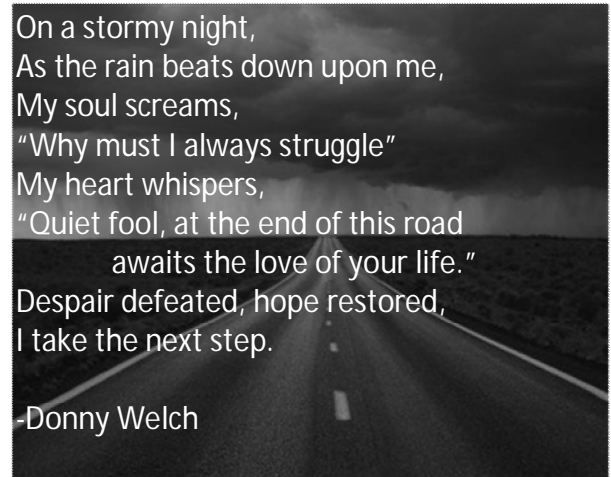
-Donny Welch



The Next Step

On a stormy night,
As the rain beats down upon me,
My soul screams,
"Why must I always struggle"
My heart whispers,
"Quiet fool, at the end of this road
awaits the love of your life."
Despair defeated, hope restored,
I take the next step.

-Donny Welch



Peeking

Take a look through the window of my soul
Do you like what you see?

Inner walls decorated with pictures of
emotions, each painted vividly
Furniture, the experiences that are as
antique as last week
And as modern as right now
The colors of the decorum Black & Pink
Flourished about anyhow

-Chris

Hated

Someone told me I was hated.
So I asked, when did the hatred begin?
Did it come with me during birth?
Like the color of my skin?
Did it arrive, with the same stride
That became the walk of my conviction?
Or, did it take seed as I fell to my knees
And prayed to the God I believe?
So when I asked why I am hated,
And no one mentioned the above then,
I knew the reason I was hated
Was because of the ones that I love.

And that hatred never ends.

-Chris

The Prison Eradication Movement



I have some thoughts to share about how broken our current system is, but first I would like to give you an idea about who I am to establish where I stand in my beliefs. My name is Chad Edwards, and I am a 20 year old anarchist from Bend, Oregon, and I am bisexual. I have been in prison since I was 18 and I'm scheduled for release in July of this year. Throughout my short lived adult years and even in my experiences as a juvenile, I've experienced hate and physical violence on many fronts from organized supremacy groups and independent bigots alike, regarding my sexuality, political views, and views on race. While I am caucasian, I've taken my share of battle wounds for sticking up for other "races," and have no regrets regarding any of it. So basically I have first hand knowledge about the daily struggles regarding prison life and the need to get rid of the current system.

With that being said, I also have some hopefully eye-opening criticisms about the state of the movement to eradicate prisons. Being an anarchist, I have encountered many mindful and intelligent people who have studies ongoing about corruption in policy regarding prisons, the devastating effects prisons have on inmates, the abuses suffered, and the economic impact that prisons have on everybody. But sadly, these intelligent, well-read people have no alternative solutions, and usually balk at me, or promptly change the subject when I call them on it. And I am forced to ask myself, "Are these people more concerned about successfully eradicating prisons, or are these people who just enjoy protesting?"

Look, we all know that wiping out every prison will do no good, without implying that another form of correction will serve better, because let's face it, without consequences people's actions will go unchecked and chaos will promptly ensue. And unfortunately, with the globe being as densely populated as it is, group consensus is doomed to systematic failure.

Myself being an anarchist, I see that where anarchists fail big time when it comes to how they are portrayed in the media is that for every fifty things and issues we protest, we may have a tangible alternative solution for one of the fifty. So it's not surprising at all when we are painted as lawless renegades hell bent on destruction, especially when we protest the prison system without publicly presenting another better suited solution. The people viewing the protest only know we are proposing that people not be punished/corrected for hurting others, and that is the biggest hole in our credibility.

The good thing, however, is that we're not crazy, and our ideas do translate to everyday, taxpaying, law-abiding people on some level. We have just failed to help them connect the dots by providing alternative solutions.

Now, I am not above this critical flaw. I'm not as intelligent and creative as I would like to be, and I don't have the answers either. But I am hopeful in that our movement is not doomed to failure and that by kicking our people's great minds into gear and beginning to focus our energies into solutions rather than problems, we can get something done.

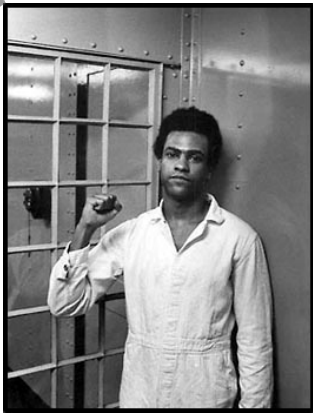
Unfortunately, we know that this won't be fixed overnight. And we may not even see our goal through in our lifetime. It's taken a long time for the system to get this fucked up, it will take possibility just as long to fix it, if we keep spinning our wheels and getting caught up in our own rhetoric. That's why it's critical that we begin refocusing our energy into laying that solid foundation of solutions for our movement to grow off of.

So this is my "wake-up" plea, to all of you. "If you are yelling just to yell, promptly shut the fuck up until you have some answers." I encourage people to get together and start working towards our future.

Thanks,
Chad



A Letter from Huey P. Newton



The following is the letter that Huey P. Newton wrote in 1970 in support of the growing women's liberation and gay liberation movements. Huey Newton was one of the founders of the Black Panther Party in the 1960s. Some of my favorite quotes of his are, "The walls, the bars, the guns and the guards can never encircle or hold down the idea of the people." and "There will be no prison which can hold our movement down." While the letter is by no means perfect and Huey was not exactly taking in to account the fact that there were queer people already in the Black Panther Party, it was incredibly radical for the time. It's important to remember the history of where queer and trans liberation comes from. This letter reminds us that the role of queer liberation is to also support revolutionary transformation as led by all marginalized communities.

-Jason

A Letter from Huey Newton to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements, 1970

During the past few years, strong movements have developed among women and among homosexuals seeking their liberation. There has been some uncertainty about how to relate to these movements.

Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion. I say "whatever your insecurities are" because as we very well know, sometimes our first instinct is to want to hit a homosexual in the mouth, and want a woman to be quiet. We want to hit a homosexual in the mouth because we are afraid that we might be homosexual; and we want to hit the woman or shut her up because we are afraid that she might castrate us, or take the nuts that we might not have to start with.

We must gain security in ourselves and therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed people. WE must not use the racist attitude of the White racists use against our people because they are Black and poor. Many times the poorest White person is the most racist because he is afraid that he might lose something, or discover something that he does not have. So you're some kind of a threat to him. This kind of psychology is in operation when we view oppressed people and we are angry with them because of their particular kind of behavior, or their particular kind of deviation from the established norm.



Remember, we have not established a revolutionary value system; we are only in the process of establishing it. I do not remember our ever constituting that any value that said that a revolutionary must say offensive things toward homosexuals, or that a revolutionary should make sure that women do not speak out about their own particular kind of oppression. As a matter of fact, it is just the opposite; we say that we recognize the woman's right to be free. We have not said much about the homosexual at all, but we must relate to the homosexual movement because it is a real thing. And I know through reading, and through my life experiences and observations that homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society. They might be the most oppressed people in the society.

And what made them homosexual? Perhaps it's a phenomenon that I don't understand entirely. Some people say that it is the decadence of capitalism. I don't know if that is the case; I rather doubt it. But whatever the

case is, we know that homosexuality is a fact that exists, and we must understand it in its purest form: that is, a person should have the freedom to use his body in whatever way he wants.



That is not endorsing things in homosexuality that we wouldn't view as revolutionary. But there is nothing to say that a homosexual cannot also be a revolutionary. And maybe I'm now injecting some of my prejudice by saying that "even a homosexual can be a revolutionary." Quite the contrary, maybe a homosexual could be the most revolutionary.

When we have revolutionary conferences, rallies, and demonstrations, there should be full participation of the gay liberation movement and the women's liberation movement. Some groups might be more revolutionary than others. We should not use the actions of a few to say that they are all reactionary or counterrevolutionary, because they are not.

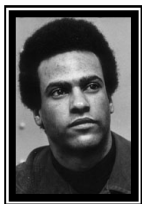
We should deal with the factions just as we deal with any other group or party that claims to be revolutionary. We should try to judge, somehow, whether they are operating in a sincere revolutionary fashion and from a really oppressed situation. (And we will grant that if they are women they are probably oppressed.) If they do things that are unrevolutionary or counterrevolutionary, then criticize that action. If we feel that the group in spirit means to be revolutionary in practice, but they make mistakes in interpretation of the revolutionary philosophy, or they do not understand the dialectics of the social forces in operation, we should criticize that and not criticize them because they are women trying to be free. And the same is true for homosexuals. We should never say a whole movement is dishonest when in fact they are trying to be honest. They are just making honest mistakes. Friends are allowed to make mistakes. The enemy is not allowed to make mistakes because his whole existence is a mistake, and we suffer from it. But the women's liberation front and gay liberation front are our friends, they are our potential allies, and we need as many allies as possible.



We should be willing to discuss the insecurities that many people have about homosexuality. When I say "insecurities," I mean the fear that they are some kind of threat to our manhood, I can understand this fear. Because of the long conditioning process which builds insecurity in the American male, homosexuality might produce certain hang-ups in us. I have hang-ups myself about male homosexuality. But on the other hand, I have not hang-up about female homosexuality. And that is a phenomenon in itself. I think it is probably because male homosexuality is a threat to me and female homosexuality is not.

We should be careful about using those terms that might turn our friends off. The terms "faggot" and "punk" should be deleted from our vocabulary, and especially we should not attach names formerly designed for homosexuals to men who are enemies of the people, such as Nixon or Mitchell. Homosexuals are not enemies of the people.

We should try to form a working coalition with the gay liberation and women's liberation groups. We must always handle social forces in the most appropriate manner and this is really a significant part of the population - both women and the growing number of homosexuals that we have to deal with.



All power to the people!

Huey P. Newton

Leader/Chief Theoretician for The Black Panther Party

"Cuba Pays for Gender Reassignment Surgery"

3/10/2010 From Pinknews.com, "News, reviews and comment from Europe's largest gay news service"

Cuba has begun paying for trans men and women to have gender reassignment surgery.

Mariela Castro, the daughter of President Raul Castro and niece of former leader Fidel, confirmed to reporters yesterday that the country began paying for the procedures in 2008.

Gender reassignment surgery was effectively banned in Cuba in 1988, when the first such procedure caused an outcry. It was only legalised in 2007.

Eight trans people are thought to have had state-funded surgery in the last two years, while another 22 are waiting for their procedures.

Ms Castro is the head of Cuba's National Centre for Sexual Education and is the country's best known gay rights advocate.

It was her who lobbied the state to lift the ban, although she said the change was never made public to avoid controversy.

She told Associated Press: "These processes of negotiation are sometimes done very quietly, so as not to stir up ghosts."

However, she would not confirm how much the procedures cost.

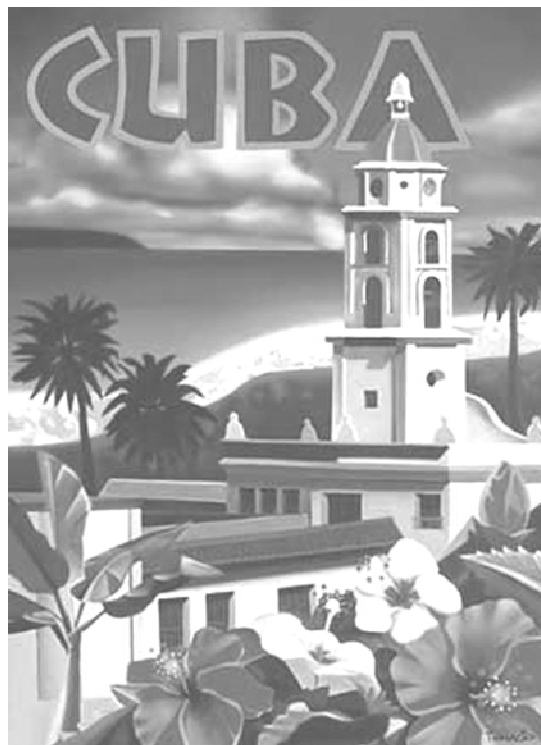
Sexual diversity was seen by Fidel Castro as a corrupt consequence of capitalism and trans people were treated with the same suspicion and prejudice as gays.

Homosexual sex was partially decriminalised in Cuba in 1979 and an equal age of consent was introduced in 1992.

While social attitudes towards gay people are generally negative, the capital city Havana has a thriving gay scene.

Under Castro, who ruled from 1959 until 2007, many gay men suffered in Cuban labour camps as the regime 're-educated' homosexuals.

Gays were incarcerated in Military Units to Aid Production between 1965 and 1968.



FRIENDS—

SEND YOUR STORY'S, THOUGHTS, POEMS, AND DRAWINGS TO BE INCLUDED IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE TO:

BLACK AND PINK— NEWSLETTER,
C/O COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON,
565 BOYLSTON ST, BOSTON, MA 02116

WE CAN'T WAIT TO READ WHAT YOU'VE COME UP WITH!